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From the editor



With the summer holidays now upon us, I wonder if readers would like to share some funny holiday anecdotes with us when they return? I will publish the best stories - of up to 200 words - and we can find out what Sonning Common people get up to over the summer!

This edition we welcome our new columnist, Tom Fort, with his own individual perspective on life, together with guest book reviewer, Lyn Wright, from a village reading group. Members of the reading group have kindly agreed to review a book for each edition.

You can find out more about the team behind Sonning Common Magazine on page 6 and on pages 14 and 15 we take a look at the workings of the village's parish council.

Thank you, as ever, to all those people who contributed letters and articles to the magazine. Please keep them coming.

ROS VARNES Editor

Email me at:

sonningcommonmagazine@googlemail.com

ps...

Sonning Common Magazine is on sale at the village library in Grove Road. Annual subscriptions are also available.

Contact distribution manager Geoffrey Adams.

Email: geoffrey.adams5@btopenworld.com Phone: 0118 972 2134

Advertising manager Suzan Robertson is away during August. For advertising queries during that time please contact Graham Thomas on 0118 972 2598 or email grahamthomas@hotmail.com

WHILE EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO ENSURE THE ACCURACY OF INFORMATION PRINTED IN THIS MAGAZINE, THE EDITOR AND THE PUBLISHER CANNOT ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF ERRORS THAT OCCUR.

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COVER IMAGE – SPLASHING TIME

Peter Varnes – taken at Sonning Common Primary School summer fair

COPY DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE 01 SEPTEMBER 2010



Village bulb-planting day

The Village Gardeners are planning a village bulb-planting day on Sunday 3 October.

Anyone with an hour to spare is invited to bring gloves, a spade or a trowel, and meet at the Sonning Common Health Centre at 10am to help plant thousands of bulbs to make the village more beautiful in spring 2011. Children are particularly welcome.

In recent months the gardeners have replanted the window boxes outside the library in Grove Road and added summer planting to its flower-beds. They have weed-sprayed the alleyways and all round the village centre, planted up the Green Lane bed, three nearby pots and the small bed near the CCA shop.

They have also added to the bed outside Daisy's and are working out how to combat the bindweed in the flower-bed outside Occasions.

They have also scrubbed the bus shelter and the telephone box in the village

centre. Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury, from The Village Gardeners, said: "It is nice to see that one or two of the shops are beginning to put out window boxes and pots."

The Village Gardeners would like to thank the following businesses and individuals for their recent donations: R McQuillan dental practice, Nottakwire, Councillor Dirk Jones, library manager Rosemary Dunstan, Sonning Common Garage and Austen TV Repairs. Thanks are also due to Stewart Scotchbrook, Green Lane Management for permission to take over the planting and management of the flower-bed at the end of Green Lane. ■



Minimarket to get a whole new look

Somerfield is due to be completely revamped this autumn and will re-open as a Co-operative food store.

A £500,000 re-fit of the shop is planned which will see the sales area being increased by 50 per cent and new Co-operative signage being introduced throughout.

A Co-operative spokeswoman said: "We can confirm that re-fit work is planned for The Co-operative Food store on

Wood Lane this autumn. The conversion follows The Co-operative Group's £1.56 billion acquisition of the Somerfield supermarket chain last year."

The Co-operative has applied to South Oxfordshire District Council for planning permission to build a single-storey extension at the back of the shop and a new boundary wall. ■

The co-operative

Can you run 10k for Kidmore End School?

Local runners are being urged to get into training for a 10k run through some of the loveliest countryside in South Oxfordshire.

The event, scheduled for Sunday 26 September, is being organised in aid of Kidmore End Primary School and the British Heart Foundation.

Organisers Vicky Pye and Jo Faithful said: "We are only a small school so this is an important fund-raiser for us. We are hoping it will become an annual fixture for everyone in the local area."

The starting point is the Kidmore End Cricket Pavilion. Runners will follow a route through delightful beech woods and along quiet country lanes. There is also a 1k run for children as well as a bouncy castle and go-karts!

Sonning Common Health Centre is supporting the event. Dr Ralph Drury, a regular runner himself, said: "It's a great idea to organise a local 10k run. At Sonning Common Health Centre we are keen to support exercise and any event that encourages people to take up regular exercise is a good thing. I am a keen runner myself, and, although quite a challenge, it's a great feeling when you complete a 10k."

Entry costs £10 for adults registering in advance or £15 on the day. Anyone signing up before 12 September will be entered into a prize draw with a chance to win a free month's introductory membership for two people of The Club at Mapledurham.

More details can be found at: www.kidmoreend10k.co.uk ■

From toes to escalators: a guide dog's life

Uri, the guide dog-in-training, was guest of honour at a Brownie pack meeting recently.

Second Kidmore End Brownies invited Uri and his trainer Jill Stewart to help them work towards their Friend to Animals badge.

Henley-based puppy walker Jill told the girls that seven-month-old Uri was starting to behave like a teenager at home and becoming a little headstrong!

"He is just coming into adolescence and is starting to decide and think for himself, which is good, but he also needs to know how to behave.

"Being a puppy walker is great," said Jill. "You get the best and worst of the dog's life. Seeing it discover the world for the first time with butterflies, snow, even people's toes, is fun but you also get the barking at night and the house training."

Uri, a Labrador/Retriever cross, went to live with Jill when he was six weeks old and will stay with her until he is just over a year old.

In that time he will have to learn to ignore loud noises such as motorbikes, hedge trimmers and fireworks while navigating safely between A and B. He will also need to cope with automatic doors and escalators.

When Uri starts working as a guide dog he may need to memorise up to 50 different routes and be able to recognise them by name. In future he may be told, "Post office", for example, and be expected to take his owner there.

Said Jill: "People often wonder how guide dogs know when it is safe to cross the road. The guide dog must get its owner safely to a road or junction but it is up to the owner to initiate the move after first listening for traffic and checking in front of them with a white cane."

Uri's training will take two years. He will retire when he is about nine and be rehomed to a suitable, new family. During the course of his working life he will be funded by Guide Dogs at a cost of around £40,000.

All of Guide Dogs' funding comes from charitable donations and it relies largely on volunteers to care for and train its dogs.

The Brownies, who meet at Christ the King church hall, in Sedgewell Road, have so far raised more than £160 for Guide Dogs. They've sold toys and vegetables, made cards, cakes and chocolate fudge, walked dogs and even washed cars.

Brown Owl Jess Higson said: "I'm really delighted with all the girls' fundraising efforts. They've done so well."

*The Brownie movement is very popular in Sonning Common; 2nd Kidmore End pack currently has a waiting list of 45 girls. If anyone is interested in helping at Brownies or Guides, or would be interested in setting up a new pack, please contact Brown Owl Jess Higson by email: jessicaemily34@hotmail.com or phone 0118 972 3026. ■

Ros Varnes



We also urgently need a new leader for the Peppard Guides. The volunteer should be between 18 and 65-years-old and needs no previous experience. Guides meet on Wednesday evenings from 7pm. All training and support will be provided. Please contact Mel Quincey on 0118 924 2814.

Hunt is on for graffiti vandals

Police are trying to trace vandals who sprayed graffiti on a number of buildings in Sibella Way recently.

The paint was sprayed onto wooden gates, doors, brickwork and roof tiles.

If anybody has any information regarding this incident, which took place on 11/12 June, they should contact the Henley Rural Neighbourhood Team on 0845 8 505 505 or Crime Stoppers on 0800 555 111.

The Henley Rural Neighbourhood Team is currently working with various local businesses to try to find a solution to this on-going village problem.

Police are also appealing for more Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators in Sonning Common. If you are interested in becoming a co-ordinator or would like to receive messages regarding Neighbourhood Watch issues, please

contact Clare Stroud on 01235 556957 or Clare.Stroud@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

The next Have Your Say meetings, where residents can speak with police about local issues, are taking place on:

MONDAY 9 AUGUST, 10am – 11am, at One Stop, Wood Lane

and FRIDAY 20 AUGUST, 7pm – 8pm, at One Stop, Wood Lane

Survey reveals who lives in the village

Sonning Common is clearly the place to be since many people have lived in the village for more than 20 years, the community plan survey results show.

Earlier this year 1,600 household questionnaires were distributed in the village. Eighty per cent of them have now been returned and most of the tick box responses analysed. They reveal that:

- **50 per cent of respondents have lived in Sonning Common for more than 20 years; 70 per cent for over 11 years**
- **44 per cent of people are over 65-years-old**
- **55 per cent of households contain no children under 16**

- **70 per cent of those employed work in the Sonning Common/Reading/Henley area**
- **44 per cent of respondents have retired, while 42 per cent are in full, part-time or self employment**

Roughly equal numbers of men and women filled out the survey, the results of which will form the basis of an important new community plan for Sonning Common.

This plan will provide a clear picture of how residents want to see the village being developed. It will cover issues including parking, road safety, housing development, facilities for young people and the general village environment. Residents' views will have to be taken into account by the authorities when the village is developed in future.

Sara Capaldi, chair of the voluntary Sonning Common Community Plan group which is

compiling the plan, said: "Sonning Common is clearly the place to live since so many people have lived here for so long.

"Over 50 per cent of respondents have taken the time to add their own written thoughts to the survey and it's great they care so much about Sonning Common. We are currently wading through all the comments to ensure that we have a good picture of how people see the village."

She thanked all the volunteers involved with the project for the huge efforts they were making. The team is planning to deliver a leaflet to all village households by the end of this year summarising the survey's main findings. ■

Young authors competition is launched

The hunt is on to find talented young writers from Sonning Common and the surrounding area.

The Young Authors competition is open to 11 to 16-year-olds who attend local schools or are members of local clubs and organisations.

Laptop computers and word processing software are among the top prizes for the writers of the best stories and plays.

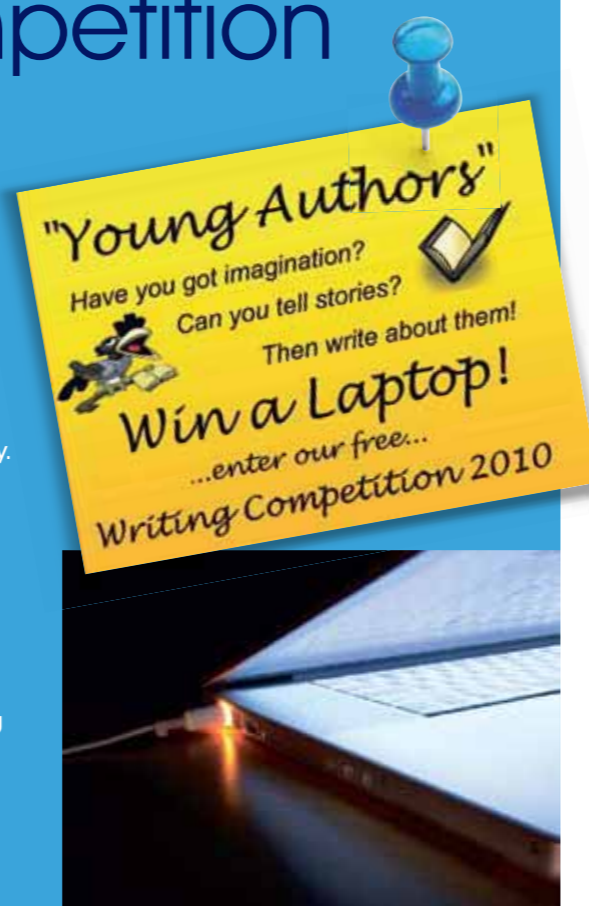
Entrants must register for the competition by 1 September and make their submissions by 1 October.

Works of between 1,500 and 3,000 words are required for the junior category (11 to 13-year-olds) to be accompanied by a 200-word handwritten summary of the story/play;

and works of between 3,000 and 5,000 words are required for the senior age group (14 to 16-year-olds) with a 300-word handwritten summary.

The competition is sponsored by Sonning Common Parish Council and the Higgs Group, printers of the Henley Standard.

For further information and registration forms please see www.sonningcommonparish.co.uk/writing or write to SCP Writing Competition, 26 Kennylands Road, Sonning Common RG4 9JT. ■



Singing through the seasons

Nottakwire, the village singing group, is continuing to attract new members and going from strength to strength.

Our fortnightly meetings are reaping a multitude of rewards – fun, sociability, and musical challenges – as well as opportunities to use our singing to support others.

Sixteen volunteers from Nottakwire sang in support of Folk4 Africa in the village hall on 5 June. Another volunteer group supported a sing-along at the FISH tea afternoon on 25 June, while on 11 July around 25 singers contributed an hour of music-making in the bandstand at Mill Meadows, Henley, at the request of the town's mayor.

Nottakwire has also made small donations to the local branch of Christian Aid and The Village Gardeners. We plan to continue to gift small sums to help local

worthy, needy causes in keeping with our original aim: "Of the community, for the community".

After an August break, we will be making our first, major public appearance with an afternoon concert in the village hall on 23 October. We hope to welcome many friends, families and villagers to this, our first 'proper' concert, the proceeds of which will go to the Sonning Common Health Centre Care Fund.

We are also planning a Christmas event on the afternoon of 18 December when we aim to donate all the proceeds towards the new building project for Sonning Common Pre-school.

If you are a gentleman – and 'nottasinger' – please come and try us out! Maybe you can swell our gentlemen's section of the group. We'd love to see you. ■

**Margaret Moola and Elaine Williams, Nottakwire leaders
Contact 0118 972 1248**



This is what Sonning Common's new pre-school building could look like, if all goes to plan. It's a very exciting contemporary design and a huge effort has been made to ensure that every aspect of the building is child-friendly with no steps, low windows and a light, bright airy interior. The new pre-school is expected to cost an estimated £435,000 and will be paid for by a government grant. The pre-school fundraising team is working incredibly hard to raise the £12,000 needed to fit-out and equip the new building. For more information about the building project go to:

www.sonningcommonpreschool.co.uk

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Bored with nowhere to go and nothing to do?

The Edge youth club at Chiltern Edge School might have the answer – for young people or volunteers.

The Edge is open to all young people. They do not have to attend Chiltern Edge or live in Sonning Common to attend.

Two sessions are held each week:

**11 to 14-year-olds
Wednesday – 6.30 - 8.30pm**

**14 to 19-year-olds
Thursday – 7 - 9pm**

Admission 50p

Activities on offer include: pool, table tennis, nail-painting, sports hall in the winter months, outdoor sports pitches, Nintendo Wii, tuck shop, chill-out room plus art and craft activities.

Special trips to go bowling, ice-skating, paintballing, swimming, and to try archery are also organised.

Young people can get involved with the activities, hang out with their friends or get to know some new people – it is up to them.

It takes a lot of hard work from volunteers to keep The Edge running and organisers are always looking for more people to help

out. Volunteers do not have to have any experience of working with young people; they just need to be open-minded and genuinely want to help. Training courses are available or they can simply learn as they go.

There are also opportunities to help out behind the scenes alongside the management committee. Any amount of time given is appreciated.

All youth club workers have to be checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. Please contact Jayne Robinson on 0118 972 4418 for further information.

who's who

at sonning common magazine

BELOW FROM L-R:
John Pearman
Geoffrey Adams
Craig Henderson
Graham Thomas
Suzan Robertson
Ros Varnes
Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury



It continues to be all change at Sonning Common Magazine. Five new people have recently joined the voluntary magazine committee and they share a determination to take the magazine forward to the next stage of its development. Here are introductions from some of the new faces on the committee and re-introductions from the old.

John Pearman Committee Member, Kennylands Road

"My wife Diana and I are fairly new members of the Sonning Common community having moved into Kennylands Road from Cambridgeshire in July of last year.

We chose to live in this area to be closer to family and friends. We were looking for a vibrant community and one that had a range of facilities which did not require a car journey to access - and found both in Sonning Common.

I hope the magazine will go from strength to strength in providing a focus for news and views on local events and organisations. I would also like to see it take on the challenge of providing a forum for debate on issues relevant to our friends and neighbours."

Geoffrey Adams Distribution Manager, Woodlands Road

"We have lived in Sonning Common for 21 years. I feel the magazine is a valuable contributor to the quality of life in our village and found myself as distribution manager when I rashly let it be known that I was retiring.

I hope the magazine builds on its strengths and would like to see it cover the neighbouring parishes of Peppard Common and Kidmore End. I am sure that in the future it will be essential for us to group in order to get our voices heard."

Craig Henderson Secretary, Westleigh Drive

"I have lived in the village for nearly five years with my wife Kirstin, having moved to the area from Somerset in 2005 for work reasons.

I wanted to get involved with the magazine to build closer links with the village community."

Graham Thomas Chairman, Woodlands Road

"I am now retired from paid employment. Gill, my wife, and I have lived in the village for 40 years in the same house.

I want the magazine to go on broadly in the direction we have planned, that is to serve the interests and needs of the people

of Sonning Common and to provide a service for advertisers, without whom the magazine could not exist.

I want local organisations to feel that we welcome their news and views, to show what a very varied community we have here and to publish articles on matters of interest to the residents of this very pleasant and lively place."

Suzan Robertson Advertising Manager, Baskerville Road

"I am originally from Canada and have lived in the village since 2000 with my husband Ian, and later, our daughter Zara.

I think Sonning Common is a great, friendly village with great shops and services. I decided to get involved with the magazine because I have always enjoyed getting it through our door and I also wanted to support the community.

I hope to see the magazine go from strength to strength and continue to have support from the community."

Ros Varnes Editor, Woodlands Road

"I joined the magazine about a year ago having moved to the village in 2006 with my husband and two children. I was immediately impressed by the welcome we received and the strong sense of community here.

When I heard the former editor was stepping down I decided to offer some time and energy to support the local magazine. Returning to my career roots as a journalist has been great fun and, as editor, I have the privilege of meeting a wide range of people from the village community.

I hope that Sonning Common Magazine will adequately reflect the whole life of the village and be both an enjoyable and informative read. I also hope that readers will use the magazine to discuss and debate the local issues which affect us all."

Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury Parish Council Representative, Woodlands Road

"I have lived in the village for 14 years and am very committed to our community life and spirit. We have so much to be proud of in this village and I think that the new-look magazine reflects this with its increasing reportage of local events.

I would like to see more contributions from local people and perhaps some life stories, particularly from people who have lived in the village all their lives. I would also like to see a youth page, perhaps compiled by the youth of the village."

Magazine says goodbye to Judy

After many years Judy Pitson, the magazine's well-known advertising manager, has decided to step down.

Mrs Pitson, from Carling Road, served as secretary too and will be sorely missed. Credited with having had a large part to play in keeping the magazine going for so long, she said: "I am grateful to our advertisers for their kindness and co-operation over the years."

Speaking at the magazine's annual general meeting in the village hall in

May, Graham Thomas, the chairman, said: "Judy has been a tower of strength and was always ready to undertake any task and to use her network of contacts in Sonning Common for the benefit of the magazine. Thank you Judy for all you have done."

He also praised the outgoing treasurer, Ken Stevens, of Red House Drive, for all his hard work and contributions to the magazine. "Ken Stevens has been our able treasurer and has somehow kept the magazine financially viable."

Mr Thomas went on to thank distribution manager Geoffrey Adams and his team of distributors for ensuring every

household in the village received a magazine; Helen Barker, the efficient diary secretary; Jean Fowler, for her help with proof-reading; Jo Hunt, the outgoing parish council representative; and former designer Bill Mulholland.

He particularly thanked all the advertisers for their continued support and paid tribute to the many local people who contributed to and helped with the magazine in a variety of ways.

Sonning Common Magazine is managed, produced and distributed by volunteers. It is a not for profit operation, funded solely by local advertising. ■



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Kidmore End War Memorial Hall

Reades Lane (opposite Chiltern Edge School)

Did you know that the Kidmore End Hall has been refurbished? It is now newly-decorated throughout and has a brand new kitchen with a full-size electric cooker, fridge and plenty of work top space.

The following classes take place every week:

MONDAY 3.30pm - 4.30pm
Tang Sou Dao (Nazim Gokcezade 0779 885 2499)

TUESDAY 9.30am - 10.30am
Tai Chi (Debbie Page 0118 972 2812)
6.45pm - 7.45pm
Aerobics/body conditioning (Nicky Thomson 07891 376 092)
8pm - 9.30pm
Yoga (Sarah Dixon 0118 984 4262)

WEDNESDAY 7.30pm - 9.30pm
Sequence Dancing (John Cartwright 01628 634766)

THURSDAY 10am - 11.30am
Line Dancing (Diane Moore 0118 940 4408)
4pm onwards Judo (Jim Lawson 01491 872294)

FRIDAY 5.30pm onwards
Aikido (Rod Hayward 0118 972 3860)

SATURDAY 9.30am - 10.30am
Aerobics/body conditioning (Nicky Thomson 07891 376 092)

SUNDAY 10am - 11am
Tang Sou Dao (Nazim Gokcezade 0779 885 2499)

If you would like to join any of these classes, the instructors will be very pleased to hear from you – just give them a call.

The following times are available for new classes: Monday evening, Wednesday morning and Friday morning.

To book the hall for classes, parties and other events please contact Val Lunn on 0118 972 3592.

An Aikido class



A Taste of France

A special French-themed lunch is to be held on Friday 3 September in the village hall to raise funds for the hall and Oxfam.

The hall will be decorated with French flags and memorabilia, and the lunch will consist of cold meats, salads, cheeses and home-made Normandy apple flans.

Profits from the event will go to the Village Hall Fund. The village hall committee relies entirely on income from letting and fund-raising events to run the hall and cope with spiralling costs every year.

There will also be an Oxfam book shop in the side room, from which all profits will go to Oxfam.

Tickets are £10. The organisers promise a delicious and extremely good value lunch. Contact Jill Vallis on 0118 972 3251 or Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury on 0118 972 1058 to book.

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY:

By the time you read this the Summer Reading Challenge for children will be nearly half way through – but it's not too late to start!

The summer challenge is designed to keep children interested in reading even when they are not at school for six weeks. The theme this year is Space Hop and children are invited to join characters Jessie, Finn, Nabil and Safiya as they blast off for the stars.

There are stickers, fridge magnets, bookmarks, pens, medals and certificates to collect.

All children have to do is make three trips to the library over the summer (between the beginning of July and the middle of September) and read six books. Not too difficult, surely?

For further information about these, or any other library activities, call in at the library in Grove Road, or phone 0118 972 2448.

Rosemary Dunstan
Library manager



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Sonning Common Primary School summer fair

The sun shone on Sonning Common Primary School's world cup-themed summer fair recently. The event, organised by the school's Parent Teacher Association, raised £4,600.



TOP ROW FROM L-R:

- Headteacher Chris Hirst braves the wet sponge
- Brother and sister Joe and Amy Havers

BOTTOM ROW FROM L-R:

- Teacher Gina Thurlow (left) and governor Alison Young
- Kites pupils do their football dance
- Thomas Branch takes part in the dribbling competition



Nostalgia trip for former pupils

Two former pupils, now in their 60s and 70s, dropped in to Sonning Common Primary School recently on the off chance that they could have a look around.

They were shown around by two Year 5 pupils, Liam Gaskin and Elliott Holland, and the former pupils entertained them with stories about how strict teachers were in their time.

Here is Liam and Elliott's story: "We were asked by Mr Hirst (the headteacher) to show some ex-pupils around Sonning Common Primary School. We met our visitors who were quite a bit older than us. They told us that they were ex-pupils and we thought it must have been quite some time ago.

"As we all walked around the school they told us about the swimming pool which many years ago used to be a hall where lunches were cooked and pupils ate their lunches. They also told us that the Trim Trail and paddock were not there in their time. The village library and school's ICT (computer) suite were not as they are now, as many years ago they were used as classrooms and offices.

"By the time our visitors were ready to leave we both thought, Elliott and I, how lucky we were to have all of the really great things that are now at Sonning Common Primary School. We also thought it was nice to make new friends even though they may not be as young as us in age!"

Headteacher Chris Hirst said: "It is nice for ex-pupils of any age to feel that this is still their school."

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SONNING COMMON PARISH council

By ROS VARNES



THIS ROW FROM L-R:

- Widmore Pond
- A village road sign

BOTTOM ROW FROM L-R:

- A village sign
- Sonning Common Village Hall
- The refurbished Lea Road play area, funded by the parish council



Members of Sonning Common Parish Council

Chair

Patricia Hughes, Essex Way

Vice-chair

Alan Rooke, Gillotts Lane, Henley

Councillors

Jane Diwell, Blounts Court Road
Jenny Poska, Reades Lane
Dirk Jones, Kennylands Road
Jane Holmes, Cheriton Place
Richard Black, Woodlands Road
Barrie Greenwood, Grove Road
Douglas Kedge, Lea Road
Jo Hunt, Grove Road
Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury, Woodlands Road
Tom Fort, Wood Lane

One of the chief responsibilities of Sonning Common Parish Council is the upkeep of the village.

The council has set aside £16,000 for new doors for the village hall. It has also contributed towards the installation of new toilets and flooring, re-decoration and the re-furbishment of the clock tower.

The council is further responsible for the alleyways throughout the village; street cleaning; the cutting of some grass verges; the allotments in Horsepond Road; the maintenance of Widmore Pond; and having all of the village's general and dog waste bins emptied.

The extensive refurbishments of the Lea Road and Baskerville Road children's play areas, totalling nearly £100,000, were down to the parish council.

Around £25,000 has been earmarked to refurbish the village's remaining play area,

in Churchill Crescent, and work is expected to start there later this year.

The parish council has three committees: general purposes, which looks after all of the above; finance, which manages the council's money; and planning, which advises South Oxfordshire District Council on local planning matters and deals with advertising boards in the village.

To carry out its work, the parish council receives £55,000 a year from the Government. Its budget, or precept, has remained at this level for the last five or six years.

The council currently has a reserve fund of £175,166 - of which £68,683 has been earmarked for specific projects such as the Churchill Crescent play area and the new village doors.

Council chairwoman Patricia Hughes said: "We have a healthy reserve fund so if anything crops up we can deal with it." ■

To debate or not to debate?

The question of whether Sonning Common Parish Council is acting democratically has been under scrutiny recently.

Following reports in the Henley Standard about power struggles within the parish council, residents have been left wondering what councillors do and why there is so much division between them at present.

The issue being hotly debated is whether decisions taken by council committees should be discussed and debated by the full 12-member council before a final decision is taken, or, simply rubber-stamped and put through.

The argument centres on the workings of the general purposes committee, which is responsible for maintaining the general village environment.

Council rules state that the general purposes committee is advisory to the full council, which means that all of its decisions have to be ratified by the full council.

In theory, the rules allow the full council to debate and discuss committee decisions. However, in practice, full council members are permitted to only ask questions and vote rather than debate committee decisions further.

Some councillors, including Douglas Kedge, Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury, Tom Fort and Barrie Greenwood, believe this is undemocratic and full council should have more of a say in the decision-making process.

An equal number of councillors, including council chairwoman Patricia Hughes, are happy to keep the status quo. They fear more talking at full council level would result in fewer decisions being taken.

Speaking at a full council meeting in June, councillor Tom Fort, from Wood Lane, said: "I do not understand how it is possible for full council to ratify decisions if it is unable to debate those decisions.

"Madam chairman, you have told me that we are not here to debate but I believe we are here to debate."

His view was endorsed by councillor Barrie Greenwood, from Grove Road, who said:

"I think that is a very valid and important point."

Council chairwoman Patricia Hughes, from Essex Way, replied: "It is not necessary to have a debate on something that has already been discussed at great length by experienced committee members and a decision made."

She later added that unless councillors felt they had something new to add to the debate it was a "waste of time" to discuss committee decisions further.

Parish clerk, Sheila Jenkins, who advises the parish council, is currently re-drafting the rules which govern the parish council, in consultation with councillors. Among other things, they are reviewing the process for handling committee decisions at full council meetings.

A draft of the new rules will be available for the full council to debate at its meeting in September. ■

Sonning Common Parish Council Meetings for 2010/11

All meetings take place in Sonning Common Village Hall. They are open to the public.

Full council

8pm **2010:** 20 September, 18 October, 15 November, 13 December
2011: 17 January, 21 February, 21 March, 18 April, 16 May, AGM
(April and May's meetings take place at 7.30pm)

General purposes committee

7.30pm **2010:** 28 September, 26 October, 23 November
2011: 25 January, 1 March, 29 March, 26 April, 24 May

Finance committee

7.30pm **2010:** 4 August, 8 September, 6 October, 3 November, 1 December
2011: 5 January, 9 February, 9 March, 6 April, 4 May

Planning committee

7.30pm **2010:** 3 & 16 August, 7 & 20 September, 5 & 18 October, 2, 15 & 30 November, 13 December
2011: 4 & 17 January, 1 & 21 February, 8 & 21 March, 5 & 18 April, 3 & 16 May
(April and May's meetings start at 7pm)



Sonning Common Parish Council

Village Hall
Wood Lane
Sonning Common
RG4 9SL

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Email: scpc@btconnect.com

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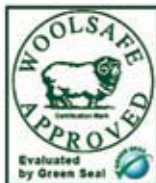
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Bird in Hand

The new owners of the Bird in Hand pub and restaurant hope they can find the way to Sonning Common's heart by providing fresh, home-made food with a twist.

From Caribbean Chicken, an exotic combination of curry and coconut flavours, to Drunken Duck - duck breast served with a malt whiskey and gooseberry sauce - the couple intend to excite some taste buds.

For more traditional palates there's Pan-fried Lamb's Liver with mashed potato and black pudding, Dill 'n' Salmon and Sirloin Steak as well as a good range of pasta and vegetarian dishes.

That's just the evening menu. Lunch-time favourites include Grilled Salmon Fillet, Home-made Cheeseburger and Mixed Bean and Feta Cheese Salad followed by desserts including Sticky Toffee Pudding and Panna Cotta.

When new owners Roger Cox and Kay Thomas first saw the Peppard Road establishment - after having already viewed around 20 potential pubs - they knew they had to make it theirs.

The Bird in Hand had been derelict for two years and was in need of a lot of love and restoration work. Part of the floor had fallen into the cellar, plaster was hanging off the walls and the garden was completely overgrown.

But Roger and Kay's practised eyes - they have between them more than 30 years experience in the international pub, hotel and restaurant industry - immediately spotted the pub's potential. They set about developing it into their first, own

business and opened their doors at the beginning of April.

Said Kay: "I'm not sure whether it was love at first sight or we just felt sorry for the place. We had a picture in our minds of what our ideal place would be and, despite first appearances, we thought the Bird in Hand could help us turn our dream into a reality."

So, they completely re-plastered and re-wired the place, installed new central heating and re-decorated throughout. They tamed the garden, installed a small fountain and ordered new, wooden furniture for the extensive garden which backs onto woods.

Now there's comfortable seating in the pub, where people can relax, drink and chat and a smart, stylish restaurant at the back of the premises.

"We wanted to keep the atmosphere and character of the pub while bringing it into the 21st century," said Roger, who trained as a chef, but worked as a police officer and fireman, before moving back to his career roots.

"In developing our lunch and evening menus, we have listened to local people and been guided by what they have said they want. We have also tried, where possible, to source our ingredients and beers locally.

"We now offer a good value lunch menu with a range of light meals, snacks and sandwiches and an a la carte menu in the evenings. We are getting good feedback from our customers and seeing a lot of repeat business.

"As for the future, we constantly want to develop our menu and range of specials."

**LUNCH-TIME SPECIAL:**

Main course only - £7

Two courses - £10

Three courses - £13

Snacks and sandwiches from £2

EVENING:

Starters - from £4.50

Main courses - from £9

Desserts - from £5

Sunday roasts are a speciality

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My children liked the new magazine

I thought the new magazine was great.
I loved the layout and yes, it is much
more modern and user friendly.

I particularly liked the fact that for the first
time in years I could make sense of the
Diary Dates and that most of the adverts
had been updated after many years.

My children aged 10, 14 and 15
actually picked it up and read it and
commented that they didn't know so
much had gone on.

Well done. It's an asset and I am sure will
be a great success. ■

JACQUI MAGEE
Kidmore Lane

History of Abbeycrest Nursing Home

If all goes according to plan, the new
Abbeycrest Nursing Home premises will be
ready within a year or so and the old building
will be demolished.

Andy, the maintenance man, thinks it would
be nice if some record of the building from
when it was a school, or perhaps even
earlier, was available to the new residents.

I wondered if someone would be prepared
to assemble a scrap book or perhaps a
display board as a record? I will also ask
former students.

If readers have photographs or short
anecdotes which might be suitable, please
will you put them together so that they can
be passed on to a volunteer to assemble?

This all depends on finding a volunteer with
the time and inspiration to record a little bit
of village history. If you would like to help,
please contact me and I will try to put all
interested parties in touch. ■

ROBIN HUNTER
0118 972 2787
hunter9sy@btinternet.com
Inglewood Close

Why Henley on the cover?

I would just like to say how great the new
magazine looks, very fresh and what it
needed, so thank you and well done!

I was just wondering, however, what the
thoughts were on choosing a picture
of Henley for the front cover of the
re-launched magazine rather than
one of Sonning Common? ■

PHILIP THEOBALD
Russet Close

The editor responds: Thank you, Philip. Several people have queried the
choice of the previous cover image. A picture of Sonning Common is always
my first choice but I have to use what is available. I chose the Regatta View
image because Henley is close to Sonning Common, July is Regatta month
(it was the June/July edition) and it was an attractive photograph. I would urge
more readers to make photographic contributions to the magazine and they
may see their images on the cover in future.



A note to fundraisers

**Having had a business now for many
years in Sonning Common, we
frequently get asked for raffle prizes by
local individuals, schools, playgroups
and so on.**

In the main we are only too happy to
help out and provide something towards
the fundraising event. However, in recent
times more and more fundraisers are
now resorting to pushing a letter through
the door, with their raffle prize request,
and asking us to contact them.

Well, "Hello out there", this is your
fundraising event and many of us, whilst
pleased to help, also have busy lives. I
feel, (as a grumpy old woman), that all
the follow-up should be yours - whether
it be for a yes or a no.

What happened to face-to-face
requests? Over the course of our lives
we have all had funds to raise, but you
have to go out there and get money,
not rely on it coming to you.

How many businesses have sourced
a raffle prize and not had it collected,
leaving the fundraisers thinking that
we are not supporting their cause,
when in fact we are just not chasing
after them.

So, well done to all those fundraisers
who actually turn up for their donations.
They may get that extra prize that
someone else never followed up on. ■

JO KEYS
Occasions, Wood Lane

The case of the missing sign

Unfortunately, the sign which read, 'Newly planted by The Village
Gardeners', has been removed from the flower-bed outside Fresh
as a Daisy and One-stop. If you know of its whereabouts, please
could you return it. Thank you. ■

CHRISSIE PHILLIPS-TILBURY
Woodlands Road

Tom Fort

AGED PARENTS

We mature fathers (59 last birthday) can have a hard time of it sometimes.

A few years back I wandered into Fresh As A Daisy with Rosie – then two or so – in my arms. Brian handed over my baguette, then complimented me on the bonniness of my granddaughter. "My daughter", I answered indignantly, but I'm not sure he believed me.

The trouble is that I am old enough to be her granddad; indeed biologically advanced enough in life to be her great-grandfather. And I have to get used to the melancholic fact that I am at least 20 years

older – and in some cases a good quarter of a century – than most of the parents on the playground.

A generation makes a big difference. This was brought home to me when we were having supper with some 'young' friends, and in the course of some extended and doubtless tedious anecdote I mentioned the name, "Harold Wilson". I was on the point of proceeding with the anecdote when it dawned on me that no one listening had a clue who Wilson was.

Inside my mind, I don't feel any different from the bright, sparky fellow I was when Harold Wilson was running the country;

full of hopes and plans and ambitions. But I have to face the reality of how others see me. To them I am – well, let's be kind to me – beyond my peak. My prime is over. The best of me is in the past.

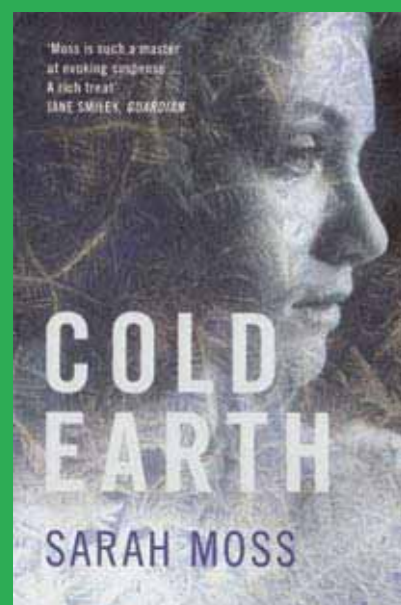
I was talking to my eldest daughter recently (I've acquired three of them along life's journey, plus a couple of sons) and mentioned the problems of being middle-aged. "But you're not middle-aged", she said. For a moment I thought she was about to say something nice. "You're too old to be middle-aged". "So I'm elderly am I?" I said dejectedly. She said she'd have to think about that. ■



Writer and journalist Tom Fort, of Wood Lane, has lived in the village for 13 years. During his 10-year career as a full-time writer he has produced books on subjects including the Englishman's obsession with his lawn and the English person's habit of talking about the weather. He also writes book reviews for the Sunday Telegraph and Literary Review. In Tom's spare time, heaven is standing in a river fishing.

BOOK REVIEW

COLD EARTH by Sarah Moss



COLD EARTH recounts the story of six young archaeologists from America and the UK who travel to a remote part of Greenland to unearth traces of the lost Viking settlements.

Written as a personal account from each person to their loved ones back home, it vividly describes the trials of surviving, not only the bleak surroundings, but their relationships with each other. Some see ghosts around them, others bring them with them.

The prose is austere, yet powerful, and vividly recreates the atmosphere and stark beauty of where they are camping.

At first, the group is in contact with the mainland by means of a satellite link-up. When the link suddenly dies concern grows over the news of a swine-flu type epidemic which had shown signs of spreading world-wide just before their departure.

As the group starts its excavations of what turns out to be a mass grave, tensions mount in the camp. Nina, one of the group, becomes increasingly unstable

as she starts to have vivid nightmares depicting how the inhabitants had been slaughtered by marauding Vikings.

At the same time she tells how she hears strange sounds in the night: "a howl rose from the dark hill, a human voice lifted in pain ... something dragged past the tents, down towards the new grave on the shore".

Gradually the fear spreads to some of the other members of the group and we learn, through their letters, how they react and deal with the situation. Are they caught up in mass hysteria or is it truly the paranormal?

The situation worsens as the weather closes in on them and they are faced with the reality of surviving on woefully inadequate supplies as they await the plane to take them home.

This book is a real page-turner and a must to take on holiday. ■

LYN WRIGHT

This review was contributed by a village book group which meets once a month to select a book to read and review.

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New programme for adult education courses

The Reading branch of the WEA (Workers' Educational Association) is continuing to offer an interesting and varied programme of short courses and some highly successful study days.

Starting this autumn the group plans to run some 34 short courses during the day and evening and 13 day schools.

Art history is a particular strength of the Reading branch. Courses planned for this autumn include

the ages of Caneletto, Van Gogh, Gauguin and Cezanne and the Splendour of European Cathedrals.

Local history is a great draw and Margaret Simons will be holding a class on Reading 1900-39 as well as looking at the town in the Georgian period. Literature courses range from the Romantic Poets to a day school called, A Talent to Amuse: The Plays of Noel Coward.

A range of courses are planned on aspects of science, including the Chemistry of Life as well as

Astronomy and a day school on Weather Forecasting.

This autumn Chris Skidmore will be presenting a 10-week course, Singing From Scratch, and Tony Short, a professional violinist, will be lecturing on Mozart's symphonies and concertos. A day school on the life and work of Sir Edward Elgar is also to take place.

A brochure, covering the period autumn 2010 to summer 2011, is available from Sonning Common Library and other village outlets. Efforts have been

made to keep fees low and concessions are available for people on benefits. The brochure can be downloaded from the WEA website or requested from:

WEA Reading
27 Derby Road
Reading, RG4 5HE
Phone 0118 946 4137

Graham P Thomas
Woodlands Road

Chiltern Players Murder At Peppard Grange

It's a jolly weekend house party in the louche 1930s but unbeknown to the guests, death is waiting in the elegant recesses of Prudence St Cloud's country home.

Prudence is hosting her usual summer bash when she discovers that a mix-up over dates has resulted in too many people for too few bedrooms, requiring the use of the 'shot-gun' room which has been locked for over 20 years.

Guests include a lord of the realm, an Oxford don, a police inspector and a Labour MP who appear to be strangers. But are they? Add to the mix a madwoman in the attic who only speaks French and you have the ingredients for a lively whodunit where no-one is quite what they seem - not even the murder victim.

Can you unmask the murderer in Murder at Peppard Grange? Performances take place at Peppard Memorial Hall, Gallowtree Road, Rotherfield Peppard on Friday 10 and Saturday 11 September at 7.30pm.

Tickets at £10 include a ploughman's supper and dessert (bring-your-own drinks) and are available from Occasions, Wood Lane, Sonning Common or phone 0118 972 3628. Tickets must be paid for beforehand.



Time to have fun on the river

A new initiative has been launched to get families actively enjoying the River Thames.

Children from Alphabet Day Nurseries in Sonning Common were among the first to receive their 'passport to fun' on the river, as part of the initiative launched by the Environment Agency.

Discover Your River Thames 2010 aims to promote river-based activities, including boating and family attractions, to raise awareness of what the River Thames has to offer and make it accessible to all.

Discover Your River Thames 2010 runs until 31 October 2010. Money-saving offers include:

- Free entry for a child at the River and Rowing Museum, Henley
- 20 per cent off canoe hire at Thames Canoes near Marlow
- 20 per cent off family activity days or short breaks at Longridge, near Marlow
- Free entry for a child aboard an Oxford River Cruises passenger boat
- Free entry for a child to Beale Park near Pangbourne

- 20 per cent off boat hire with Fringilla in Runnymede and Maidenhead
- 20 per cent off picnics and boat hire at the Beetle and Wedge Boathouse in Moulsoford

The children's 'passport to fun' is available to download from www.visitthames.co.uk/discover2010. A prize draw is to take place with a chance to win a year of family leisure activities along the River Thames worth over £1000.



ABOVE:

Mr Toad and Aftab Ahmed, owner of Alphabet Day Nurseries, with Joe May and Chloe Cormack.

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RIGHT:

- Members of Sonning Common Baby and Toddler Group outside the new shed.

Playgroup enjoys its new shed

Sonning Common Baby and Toddler Group is celebrating the completion of its new shed.

The shed was erected by local firm, Charles Property, with a generous Grassroots Grant from Oxfordshire Community Foundation.

The group is absolutely delighted to have a safe shed that no longer leaks. New toys and equipment have also been purchased.

The group, founded in the 1970s, is still going strong and has recently introduced a popular monthly messy play morning.

Children are exposed to a variety of sensory experiences while having fun. Sessions include playing with cornflour, printmaking with balloons, biscuit decorating, a sand tray, bubbles, play dough and much more.

There's always a different craft activity for the children. Mixed media collage birds, made by the children, were displayed in Sonning Common Library during the summer.

The group meets every term-time Wednesday from 10am-12pm in Christ the King Church Hall on Sedgewell Road and welcomes children aged 0-5,

accompanied by parents, grandparents or childminders. There's no need to book - just go along and play. ■

Contact Alison Howson on
0118 972 1131 for more information.



The Sonning Common Society

The Sonning Common Society is a local amenity group which seeks to encourage pride in the character and appearance of the village and its countryside. It is concerned with:

- the environment
- the siting and design of new buildings and the use of others
- transport and pollution
- woodlands and trees
- public rights of way

The Society arranges four walks each year for the enjoyment of the countryside and also to mark rights of way. It also produces a Village Guide annually which can be obtained from the library in Grove Road and local shops. This is packed with useful information and costs just 50p. Postcards, priced 20p each, are also available from the same outlets.

Membership of the Society is open to all residents of Sonning Common.

Members receive two informative newsletters each year.

Meetings about local issues take place twice a year.

Membership costs £2 for a one-member household, plus £1 for each additional member.

Please do join us by completing the membership form below:

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Run mainly by volunteers, the service is free, confidential, impartial and independent. It is available to

everyone regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age or nationality.

Last year advisers helped nearly two million people to solve six million problems in the UK!

If you are facing one of life's problems and need some help, appointments are available at:

Sonning Common Health Centre
2nd, 3rd & 4th Tuesday of every month, 10.30am – 2.30pm

Alternatively telephone or call into the Henley & District Citizens Advice Bureau at 32 Market Place, Henley (at the side of the Town Hall) on weekday mornings 10am-1pm. Call 01491 572129 to talk to an adviser or to arrange an appointment. ■

www.cabsouthoxon.org.uk/Henley.htm

Advice and information is available from www.adviceguide.org.uk



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Our regular Sunday morning service is at Christ the King, Sedgewell Road, at 9.30am. Everybody is welcome – families in particular – and there are refreshments afterwards. Please note, however, that there is no service on **29 August**. Instead a joint service will take place at St John's at Kidmore End at 11am.

Saturday 11 September is the date of this year's Ride/Stride event for cyclists and walkers, in support of historical churches in Oxfordshire. For more information, please see our church magazine, The Lamb and Flag.

Another diary date is **Sunday 3 October** when we will have our harvest lunch. Watch out for details.

After a summer break, our discussion group will start up again from September, on the first Wednesday of each month, at Christ the King, at 7.30pm. We start with tea, coffee and biscuits and everybody is welcome. Why not give it a try?

Finally, thank you to all those people who collected for and contributed to Christian Aid during May. A total of £1911 was collected, a wonderful effort. Thank you to Eileen Pearson for organising the collection.

We are grateful, too, to those people who made a donation on the church's Gift Day towards the support of our two churches. ■

Neil Scott
On behalf of the Parochial Church Council

Aug

Sep

MONDAY 2 FISH – Garden centre visit 1.30pm	TUESDAY 10 Sonning Common best front garden competition Judging commences for 3 days	THURSDAY 19 FISH – Pub lunch 11.30am	SATURDAY 21 58th Nettlebed Art and Craft Show Nettlebed school & community hall 12pm-9pm
SUNDAY 22 58th Nettlebed Art and Craft Show Nettlebed school & community hall 10am-5pm	MONDAY 30 Sonning Common Society Bank holiday ramble Village Hall 10am	FRIDAY 3 French-themed fund-raising lunch Village Hall	SATURDAY 4 Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society Autumn Show Chiltern Edge School hall 2.30-4.30pm
MONDAY 6 FISH – Garden centre visit 1.30pm	FRIDAY 10 Nottakwire meeting Village Hall 9.45am	FRIDAY 10 Chiltern Players - Murder at Peppard Grange 1930s murder mystery evening Peppard Memorial Hall 7.30pm	SATURDAY 11 Chiltern Players - Murder at Peppard Grange 1930s murder mystery evening Peppard Memorial Hall 7.30pm
THURSDAY 16 Sonning Common Women's Institute Sugarcraft demonstration by Daphne Crook Village Hall - 7.30pm	THURSDAY 16 FISH – Pub lunch 11.30am	FRIDAY 17 British Legion tea dance Village Hall 2-4pm	MONDAY 20 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 8pm
FRIDAY 24 Nottakwire meeting Village Hall 9.45am	SUNDAY 26 Kidmore End School 10k run plus 1k run for children Kidmore End cricket pavilion Registration – 9am 10k – 10.30am, 1k – 9.45am		

FISH runs regular shopping trips to Tesco in Henley and Henley and Reading town centres. For more information and to book call 0118 972 3986. ■

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